




Speech By
Hon. Yvette D'Ath

MEMBER FOR REDCLIFFE

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QUEENSLAND UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY AMENDMENT BILL

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Minister for Health and Ambulance Services) (5.05 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the Queensland University of Technology Amendment Bill 2021 which was introduced by the Minister for Education, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing on Wednesday, 1 September 2021. The bill was referred to the Education, Employment and Training Committee for consideration and I would like to thank the members of that committee for their detailed consideration of the bill, including the chairperson and member for Redlands, the member for Rockhampton, the member for Stafford and the member for Stretton, who I note attended a hearing during the committee's deliberations. I also thank those non-government members on the committee for their contribution to the consideration of the bill.

The committee published its report and recommended that the bill be passed, which I believe is a sensible conclusion regarding this legislation. I do need to declare that I am a proud Queensland University of Technology alumnus. I believe that it is one of the best universities in Queensland, if not Australia, and it is important that there are appropriate governance structures in place to ensure that the Queensland University of Technology can continue to strive and go from strength to strength in the years and decades ahead. Those who know me know I value the importance of strong education. Education is the foundation for one's career and those who choose to undertake tertiary education should do so in an institution with strong governance arrangements which ultimately support student outcomes.

As members will know—but to be clear—the purpose of the bill is to implement governance reforms for the Queensland University of Technology to reduce the size of the governing council from 22 members to 15 members. In addition, I am advised that the bill will enable an appropriate balance between the number of members and mix of necessary skills and expertise required for effective governance by the council.

Under the current Queensland University of Technology Act, the council comprises of 22 members made up of four categories: official, appointed, elected and additional. I am advised that there are currently three official members, eight appointed members, nine elected members and two additional members. This bill will amend the act to streamline the Queensland University of Technology's governance body by reducing the size of that council. As the Minister for Education, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing outlined earlier today, the current council is larger in size than the current Queensland cabinet and the Queensland shadow cabinet—although I am not sure who makes up the majority of the Queensland shadow cabinet, but I digress.

The legislation will also introduce requirements to assist with the balance of the representation on the council to ensure a requirement that at least two additional members are alumni of the Queensland University of Technology and a requirement that one of the two elected student members is to be an undergraduate student and one is to be a postgraduate student. I support these amendments and I am sure that everyone at the Queensland University of Technology will welcome these changes which will assist their organisation now and into the future.

This bill and its amendments are evidence of the Palaszczuk government's commitment to listening and consulting with stakeholders to get the best legislative outcomes. As stated, I was a student of the Queensland University of Technology. Before I go further I want to state that the member for Nanango and I did not share notes. I have neither plagiarised her speech, nor has she plagiarised mine, but we do have similar stories. I undertook my Bachelor of Laws externally through QUT while starting my family, doing summer school subjects to make up for those subjects I could not do while working full-time and having my babies. That was the flexibility that QUT provided and continues to provide and why so many people choose Queensland University of Technology as their pathway. It understands that you have to offer different opportunities for different people and different circumstances to ensure that everyone who wants to attend university, no matter what their background is, even if they left school at 15, no matter who they are, has the option to do that and can achieve whatever they want to achieve through those flexible arrangements. I am very grateful for that.

My Bachelor of Laws degree provided a strong foundation for my career not only as an industrial advocate, advocating on behalf of members of the Australian Workers' Union, but also as a federal member of parliament and a state member of parliament. It certainly helped me in my role as attorney-general and minister for justice, which was a role that I enjoyed immensely, ensuring that Queenslanders had strong laws that protect and support them.

I thank the Minister for Education, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing for her leadership on this piece of legislation and for bringing it before the Queensland parliament for its consideration. I know that bringing legislation to the floor of the parliament is not a job a minister does alone; they work in conjunction with and with the support of their department and office. I thank the Department of Education and also the Office of the Minister for Education, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing for their work on this importance piece of legislation.

While this bill will most likely not see the nightly news, it is an important piece of legislation that is another example of how the Palaszczuk government is getting on with the job of ensuring that Queenslanders and, in particular, Queensland universities, such as the Queensland University of Technology, have the legislative bedrock available to do their jobs. With those short words, I commend the Queensland University of Technology Amendment Bill 2021 to the House.